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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, December 12, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Christmas Trees and Greens." Information from the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The men in the United States Forest Service don't live at the North Pole and drive reindeer. They don't wear red coats and white whiskers. And they don't make a practice of climbing down chimneys and filling stockings with toys. But just the same, they have a lot in common with Santa Claus. You might say, they are his first assistants in this country. For like him, they're on the job to see that every child shall have a real, old-fashioned merry Christmas. They leave the toy and candy business to Santa Claus himself. They are working to insure a lighted tree to sing carols around and evergreen wreaths to hang in the windows for every family in 1935 -- and in 1995, and every other year. You see, these foresters are interested in conserving Christmas, so that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be able to enjoy the day as we do.

The foresters and their helpers, the CCC boys, are at work the whole year round helping to save our evergreens. They are protecting our forests from fire and disease. They have planted many acres of forest land that has become bare from fire or wrong timbering. They have collected seeds and planted young seedlings. They have removed diseased trees or inferior species to benefit the strong healthy trees. And where the young trees have come up too thick, they have cut out trees to give the others a chance. Then, they are always trying to help the farmer who is interested in raising Christmas trees or Christmas greens like holly as a business.

But you can imagine how they feel about the greedy Christmas thief who goes out each year and cuts recklessly on other people's property either for his own use or to sell at the market. You can imagine how they feel about the people who have taken so many truck-loads of our beautiful native holly or laurel out of the woods that these evergreens are in danger of dying out entirely within the next few years. You can imagine their opinion of the vandals who drive out in automobiles and hack down the evergreens along our highways, who cut and discard several trees to find a perfect one, or ruin a large tree by cutting the top out. You can also imagine how they feel about the people who cut down thrifty young trees in open stands that should be allowed to grow up into valuable timber. And you can imagine how they feel about the thousands of cut but unsold trees that find their way to city dumping grounds each year because there is no market for them.

But the foresters are very much in favor of wise cutting of evergreens. They approve of cutting trees to clear pasture land or thin woodlots. They approve also of growing Christmas trees and holly for the Christmas market. They say tree cutting may be a paying business and may benefit the forest into the bargain. Helpful Christmas cutting in forests has been going on in Germany and Austria for generations.

In this country, the foresters themselves supervise the cutting of many trees from our national forests for the Christmas trade. Maybe you have bought one of these selected trees. If you have, you know that each one has a tag that says: "This tree brings a Christmas greeting and was cut not in a destructive way but to give room for neighboring trees to grow faster and better."

Some of our western States -- Colorado, Wyoming and Washington, took the lead some years ago in having labels of approval issued by foresters for Christmas trees that are properly harvested. So every person shopping for a Christmas tree could be sure he wasn't doing damage to the forests by buying one. The States of Oregon and Washington have made it illegal to cut Christmas trees without first getting the permission of the owner. And some cities now regulate the sale of trees and greens by requiring every dealer to pay for a license and have his wares inspected or to sell only trees bearing a tag that shows they have been taken with the owner's permission.

To prevent waste of Christmas trees, the Forest Service advises farmers to find a market with a responsible buyer before doing any heavy cutting. The experience of many farmers has been that indiscriminate cutting and peddling of trees seldom pays. Especially in the larger cities, farmers have to compete with the large commercial shipments from the forests of the northeast states, the lake states andthe great Northwest.

Of course, the foresters approve of the idea of a growing Christmas tree, either indoors or out. Many cities now have a growing community Christmas tree that they light once a year for the whole town to enjoy. In Washington, D. C., the great evergreen tree in the square opposite the White House is lighted each year by the President. And the people who gather around it to sing carols have the accompaniment of the Marine Band. For your own home, you can buy a small living tree in a pot for Christmas which you can later transplant to the yard to be decorated as an outdoor tree on successive years.

The one traditional Christmas green that the foresters won't object o your cutting in quantity is the mistletoe. For the mistletoe is a parasite on other trees. It has sucker roots and fastens on the limbs of a tree where it may grow in a dense bunch from 1 to 3 feet across. It has oval yellowish-green leaves and waxy white berries. And it is a parasite on many different trees but especially on the oak. Our mistletoe is native from New Jersey and Southern Indiana to the South. It increases in abundance in the warmer sections. Southern swamps are full of it. With the falling off of the use of holly and other familiar Christmas greens, the demand for mistletoe will be on the increase. So the farmer who lives in mistletoe country can help his trees and make some Christmas money by cutting down the mistletoe.

Well, that's all the news I have for you today from the Forest Service about Christmas trees and greens for the present and future. Every patriotic citizen can do his bit toward helping the forests of the country and Santa Claus' assistants, the foresters, by buying the right kind of greens and working against Christmas vandalism.

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